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ABSTRACT

This booklet, one of a series featuring the Canadian provinces, presents a brief overview of Saskatchewan and is suitable for teacher reference or student reading. Separate sections discuss history, economy, oil, uranium, potash, coal, minerals and metals, agriculture, forestry, tourism and recreation, arts and culture, and people. Specific topics include the province's topography; physical settings; early occupation by Paleo Indians, Metis, and Europeans; and economic and political development. Oil, uranium, potash, coal, sodium sulphate, and metal-ore production are noted as resources essential to Saskatchewan's economic and industrial wealth. The importance of wheat production, cattle-raising, forestry, trapping, commercial fishing, and tourism is also emphasized. The region is described as rich in arts and cultural heritage with its mixture of cultures and growing reputation as a center for the arts. The final section describes the ancestral origins of the people and pays tribute to the province's pioneer heritage. In addition, a simple map showing Canada's major cities and provinces is provided. (LH)

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Saskatchewan

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Saskatchewan's landscape — its great open spaces — has been an important factor in its development as a province. The province is the middle of Canada's three prairie provinces. It is bounded by Manitoba on the east, Alberta to the west, the Northwest Territories to the north, and to the south by the states of Montana and North Dakota across the International Boundary with the United States. Roughly the shape of a rectangle, it extends from north to south for 1,225 km (761 miles) and has an average width of 540 km (335 miles). Its total area is 650,090 km^2 (251,700 square miles) of which 81,631 km^2 (31,518 square miles) is fresh water.

Precambrian rock formation underlies most of the northern third of the province. This is typical of the Canadian Shield, of which it forms a part. In the north, Saskatchewan encompasses lakes and rivers which cover almost 15 per cent of the province, wide areas of muskeg and swamp, forests and scattered outcroppings of rock. The north holds large supplies of uranium.

The southern two-thirds of the province is a level plain broken by occasional ridges and valleys, resulting from glacial erosion. This area contains the rich mineral deposits of coal and potash and most of the settled land, as well as a flourishing oil industry. Here also is the vast and productive agricultural land to which Saskatchewan owes its position as a major world producer of cereal crops. The soil in the area is particularly conducive to cultivation of wheat, barley, oats, rye and rapeseed — the principal crops — under optimum conditions of dryland farming. The growing season varies from 90 to 120 frost-free days a year.

The three major river systems crossing the province — the Assiniboine, the North and South Saskatchewan and the Churchill — all empty into Hudson Bay. Saskatchewan is noted for its exceptional sunsets. Temperatures may vary from 38°C (100°F) in summer to -45°C (-50°F) in winter.

History

The first men in Saskatchewan are believed to have been Paleo Indians who crossed from Asia to North America 20 to 30 thousand years ago. Recorded history began in 1690, when the explorer Henry Kelsey reached Saskatchewan by land. French and English fur traders and explorers turned their canoes along the wide river the Cree Indians called *Kis-is-ska-tches-wan* (fast-flowing). By 1774, men in search of beaver pelts for the Hudson's Bay Company had built the first settlement, Cumberland House, at the crossroads of two major river highways, making it a key post close to the northern supply of the finest fur-bearing animals. From 1763 until 1869, present-day Saskat-

chewan was part of Rupert's Land, a vast territory controlled by the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1870, the territory was purchased by the new Dominion of Canada.

In 1874, the North West Mounted Police were established and implemented the ordinances of the first provisional government, the North West Council, which was appointed by the Government of Canada. With the arrival of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1882, settlers came in increasing numbers. Finns, Czechs, Chinese, Hungarians, Irish, Italians and Slovaks arrived, lured by the offer of land for settlement.

The *Métis*, persons of mixed Indian and European ancestry, lived in the northern part of Saskatchewan near Batoche and Cumberland House. With the influx of so many settlers, a struggle emerged between old and new inhabitants. The Federal Government began to sell tracts of land to help pay for the railway. The *Métis*, fearing the decline of the fur trade, established a provisional government to voice their claims. Louis Riel, president of this provisional government, seized power and a series of armed clashes erupted between the *Métis* and the newly-arrived settlers and police. Peace was restored in 1885 following a battle at Batoche during which Riel was defeated.

By 1900, the lure of free land drew settlers from Scotland, the United States of America, the Ukraine, France, Belgium, Russia and Scandinavia. In 1905, Saskatchewan, with its quarter of a million residents, gained provincial status. Regina became the capital. Saskatchewan's prime industries were wheat-growing and cattle-raising.

Saskatchewan soon developed its own political and social institutions, distinct from those of the two neighbouring prairie provinces. The co-operative movement sprang up early in the province's history and received additional impetus during the drought and depression years of the 1930s, which hit Saskatchewan harder than any other part of Canada. Today the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, a farmer-owned co-operative for grain purchasing, is the largest organization of its kind in the world.

For similar reasons, Saskatchewan was fertile ground for third-party reform political movements. One of these, the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), a social democratic party, was first elected to office in 1944 and has held power for 28 of the intervening 35 years, changing its name to the New Democratic Party (NDP) in 1961. Saskatchewan introduced the first state hospital and medical and automobile insurance plans in North America.

Economy

Today Saskatchewan's economic structure is undergoing profound changes. From an agricultural economy, it is changing to one in which non-agricultural industries contribute over 50 per cent of the province's commodity production. Still, agriculture remains the largest single industry.

The change-over started slowly in the post-war era with the discovery of oil, and grew as service and supply industries developed to support the find. This was followed by the discovery of potash and helium and the production of natural gas, and by discovery of extensive uranium reserves in the northern part of the province. A trend was established from rural to urban life.

The diversification of Saskatchewan's economy is illustrated by the fact that the service sector has expanded greatly and now accounts for about half of the total gross domestic product. Manufacturing has also increased considerably. It should be noted that food processing and distribution and farm machinery, which constitute a large part of these sectors, are tied to agriculture. Substantial oil refining and steel manufacturing facilities are located in Regina.

The cities of Saskatoon and Prince Albert, and some northern Saskatchewan communities, will for the next several years be experiencing higher business levels, population increases and new industry location. The south will continue to be agricultural. Resource activity rose substantially in 1978 and continued to rise throughout 1979. While provincial revenues have increased as a result, a rise corresponding to this new level of activity cannot be expected before 1981, when uranium production increases and heavy-oil projects prove themselves.

Oil

The active search for oil in Saskatchewan dates from the year 1906, when the first well was drilled. The real momentum, however, was gained after the discovery of the Leduc Field in Alberta in 1947. This sparked renewed interest in the oil potential of Saskatchewan. Important oil pools were found in several parts of the province and, by 1966, annual production had reached its peak of 93 million barrels. Light-oil pools are becoming depleted but various heavy-oil pools have been discovered in the Lloydminster area. The key stumbling block to heavy-oil development is its low recovery rate.

The extremely viscous oil is difficult to recover using conventional methods, which yield an average recovery of 5 per cent of the oil-in-place. Millions of dollars will be spent by industry and government on pilot projects in the next several years to de-

velop technology to increase the percentage of oil that can be recovered. Heavy oil represents a large portion of Saskatchewan's oil-in-place, with 4.59 billion barrels termed "established" and an estimated ultimate potential of 18 billion barrels. Saskatchewan is second in Canada in crude oil production, accounting for 10 per cent of the national total. Recovery projects will give industry and government a good idea of the total reserves that can be tapped. Attention will then swing to economic considerations affecting the building of upgrading plants. It is estimated that the long production life of heavy oil will bring Lloydminster a stable 40 to 50 years of economic activity.

Uranium

Radioactive minerals were first discovered in the Beaverlodge district of northern Saskatchewan in the 1930s during exploration of a gold property. In 1969-70, uranium production was 621,988 kg (1,371,225 pounds), valued at $9,598,575. Saskatchewan has large unproven reserves as well as proven reserves of economic value. The recent energy crisis has prompted increased exploration. There are no precise estimates for exploration expenditure but up to $100 million could be spent. The largest committed and approved projects to date are the Cluff Lake and Rabbit Lake operations. The provincial government, through the Saskatchewan Mining Development Corporation (SMDC), is actively involved in the uranium rush. Since 1975 SMDC has been able, by law, to obtain up to 50 per cent equity in any mineral project. SMDC's biggest activity last year was increasing its equity in the $300-million Key Lake mine-mill project from 33.3 to 50 per cent.

Potash

The Crown-owned Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan (PCS), which had almost no holdings four years ago, is now North America's largest potash producer. A $10-million expansion program is already under way. PCS has completed its acquisition program and plans to reach its desired goal of 50 per cent of the industry's capacity through expansion. At least 90 per cent of the world's potash production is used for fertilizer. The remaining output has many industrial applications, including use in the manufacture of explosives, detergents, photographic chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and insecticides. In Saskatchewan, potash mineralization was first recognized in ore from an oil exploration well in 1943. Identification of potash from well data was later facilitated by the development of borehole gamma-ray detectors about 1950. Early attempts at commercial production were plagued with difficulties, especially from water flooding in shafts and mine workings. First

shipments were made from a mine near Saskatoon during 1959.

Potash reserves in Saskatchewan are extensive; they represent 50 per cent of known world reserves. Conservative estimates of recoverable potash, using present-day mining techniques, are in the region of 5.8 billion metric tonnes (6.4 billion tons) and actual reserves are probably much higher. At present production rates, Saskatchewan has sufficient potash to last at least 2,000 years.

The Potash Corporation is now concentraing on the expansion of its properties to meet the growing market for Saskatchewan potash. Phase one expansions are currently under way at the Cory and Rocanville Divisions. As well, a rehabilitation and expansion project at the Lanigan Division is scheduled for completion by 1980 and will increase production capacity to 915,000 tons at an estimated cost of $38.7 million. A second-phase expansion for Rocanville was also announced during the year. Expected to be finished in 1981, the expansion will increase capacity to 1,220,000 tons.

Coal

Lignite coal has been mined in southern Saskatchewan since the late 1800s. Lignite is an immature form of coal, having a higher ash content and a lower thermal value than other ranks of coal. About 1930, the era of strip mining began in Saskatchewan with the development of large draglines. In 1956, underground mining ceased as strip mining proved to be much more efficient. Production is now over 36.2 tonnes (50 tons) a man shift, compared with 4.5 tonnes (5 tons) a man shift from underground workings. Saskatchewan lignite has in the past been used for domestic heating, fuel for railway locomotives and fuel for industry. Today, the major market is the large capacity thermal power stations. It is envisaged that lignite may find other applications in the production of chemicals or of energy for the processing of local industrial minerals (potash, sodium sulphate). In 1978, coal production totalled 5 million tonnes (5.5 million tons). Of this total, the Saskatchewan Power Corporation consumed approximately 85 per cent for generation. Much interest is being shown in lignite in Saskatchewan by the provincial and federal governments and by large mineral companies.

Mineral and metals

Discovery of sodium sulphate in the alkaline lakes of southern Saskatchewan dates from 1821. Salt cake is a crude form of sodium sulphate, making up about 70 per cent of production. Most of this goes to the wood pulp industry, where it is used in a process to recover

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sodium hydroxide. Since 1918 more than 20 companies have been formed to exploit the vast sodium sulphate reserves and production has increased steadily from 163,260 tonnes (180,000 tons) in 1959 to a peak of 453,500 tonnes (500,000 tons), valued at $8.3 million, in 1969. Since then the market has deteriorated, and both production and unit prices have declined.

Saskatchewan's largest metal mine, Flin Flon, which straddles the Saskatchewan-Manitoba border, produces both copper and zinc from the same ore. The Flin Flon base-metal ore contains copper, zinc, lead, gold and silver. The mine was started in 1930 and a large concentrator-smelter was built to process the ore. The plant has been in continuous operation for 40 years and has processed about 63.5 million tonnes (70 million tons) of ore valued at about $1,500 million. The Hudson Bay complex of mines stretches from the Saskatchewan-Manitoba border to Snow Lake, Manitoba. It has reserves of 17.2 million tonnes (19 million tons), which represents approximately 11 years at present production rates.

Agriculture

Agriculture is the province's largest single source of income. Forty-three per cent of the improved land in Canada is located in Saskatchewan, with about 46 per cent of the total area of the province made up of occupied farmland. The natural resource base of Saskatchewan gave an initial advantage to agricultural development. Soil, topography and climate favoured specialization in wheat production, while transcontinental railways and branch lines made it possible. Wheat acreage expanded from the beginning of the century — and particularly during the First World War — until 1921 but has since remained relatively stable. For the last quarter of a century Saskatchewan has provided approximately 65 per cent of the total wheat area of the prairie provinces. Wheat production has therefore consistently occupied a more significant position in the economic life of Saskatchewan than in any other province. Mixed farming, dairying (usually associated with wheat-growing or determined by proximity to the larger urban centres) and ranching are important, but the production of wheat is still the major concern of the majority of Saskatchewan farmers. Two-thirds of the land annually seeded to field crops is normally devoted to wheat, with barley and rapeseed each claiming about one-third of the remaining land. Saskatchewan produces most of the country's rye and is a major producer of oats and flax. Intensive specialization in wheat relative to other grains on the semi-arid plains is made possible by the great drought-resisting

capacity of wheat and the extremely high quality of wheat produced.

Cattle-raising has always been important in the development of the West and today it still accounts for 20 per cent of farm income. In addition, the meat-packing industry makes a substantial contribution to employment and payrolls in the province. Other livestock produced are chicken, turkey, swine and sheep.

Greater mechanization has altered the Saskatchewan agriculture during the past two decades, during which average farm size has increased. With the assistance of provincial agricultural programs, the drop in the number of farms is levelling off. The rural population is becoming stabilized and farmers are encouraged to participate more fully in food processing. The provincial agricultural department is encouraging diversification in farming.

Forestry

The products of Saskatchewan's vast forests are of great economic significance, both as lumber and pulpwood. Although the total forested area of northern Saskatchewan covers approximately 305,502 km^2 (118,000 square miles) the area of commercial forest is only about 106,149 km^2 (41,000 square miles).

The proportion of hardwood to softwood is about equal. Saskatchewan's first pulp mill was completed in 1968. Located at Prince Albert, it processes some three-quarters of a million cords of pulpwood annually. Current production is 816.3 tonnes (900 tons) a day of high-grade bleached draft pulp. Increasing demand for pressed wood has brought about a rapid growth in this industry. A particle-board plant processes large quantities of chipped aspen (a variety of poplar). Plywood production has also increased.

Tourism and recreation

Saskatchewan is recognized as a hunter's paradise. It is one of the largest breeding grounds for ducks and geese and is considered one of North America's finest game bird areas. A source of well over $1 million in income for northern residents is the trapping of beaver, mink, bear and muskrat. Commercial fishing in northern Saskatchewan is worth over $3 million annually. Taken from some of Canada's best inland fishing water, the average catch is approximately 7.06 million kg (15.6 million pounds) a year. Particularly important are lake trout and whitefish.

Saskatchewan contains some large parks, including Prince Albert National Park, a beautiful lake-and-wilderness area north of the city of the same

name, a dozen provincial parks, and several historic parks. Fort Walsh in the Cypress Hills, in the southwest corner of the province, is a complete restoration of an early Mounted Police post. A national historic site at Batoche commemorates a battle of the 1885 *Métis* uprising.

Arts and culture

The physical resources of Saskatchewan, which have been essential in its economic and industrial development, have also greatly affected the cultural heritage of the province. A distinctively prairie culture has arisen from the mixture of cultures of the homesteaders who came to settle there. Many individuals and groups have contributed to the growth of the arts in Saskatchewan, where there is now a confident professional community of artists.

In 1846, Paul Kane spent August and September crossing Saskatchewan. He visited Fort Carlton, sketching the Cree Indians and the buffalo. The stark realities of pioneer life in the province are softened in paintings of the period by delicate use of colour.

Intellectual and physical isolation created a challenge for creative artists in Saskatchewan as they have in all young communities. By 1920 Saskatchewan had completed that phase of uncertainty that characterizes pioneering societies and had achieved a degree of affluence. Regina became the centre for art education. It was at Regina College, now the University of Regina, that the province's only formal art school developed. Young artists also created a colony in the city of Saskatoon. In both major cities symphony orchestras, art galleries and professional theatre are well established.

In 1959, the Provincial Legislature granted the Minister of Education permission to establish a Saskatchewan Arts Board which supported and encouraged drama, the visual arts, music, literature and handicrafts. Gradually new emphasis was placed on high standards, and a consistent provincial attitude to the arts was created. More and more serious artists, craftsmen and students, drawn by stable resources and the Board's supportive program, have settled in Saskatchewan, contributing to the growing reputation of the arts in the province.

People

Saskatchewan is Canada's only province where the majority of the population does not have British or French cultural backgrounds. The population

of 945,000 has a variety of ethnic inheritances — German, Ukrainian, Scandinavian, native Indian, Dutch, Polish and Russian as well as British, French and many others. The cultural traditions brought by these settlers are cherished by the people of Saskatchewan.

A permanent memorial, carved in stone on the entrance of the Saskatchewan Museum of Natural History, honours "all the pioneers who came from many lands to settle in this part of Canada, a tribute to their vision, toil and courage which gave so much to Saskatchewan and this nation".

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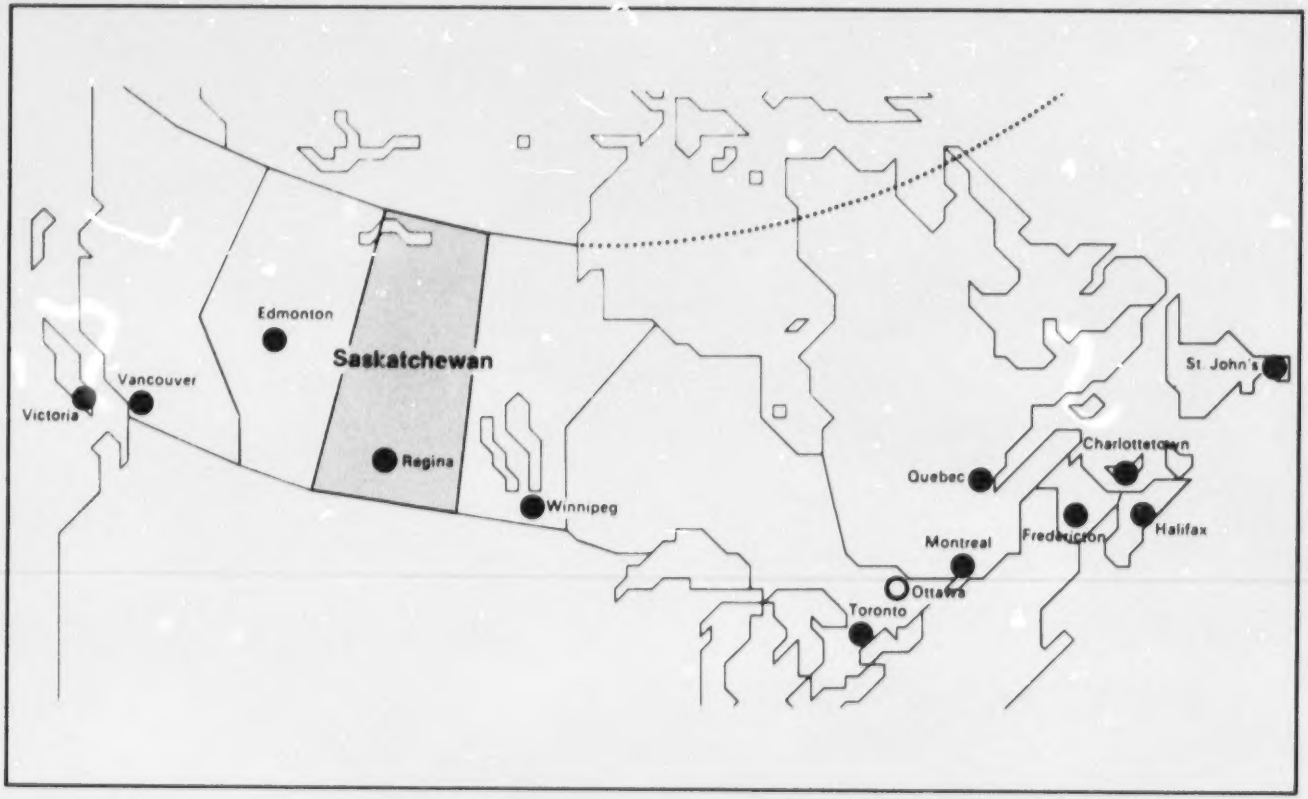
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